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To: Comprehensive Planning Committee

From: Merritt Clapp-Smith, City Planner

Date: February 10, 2010

Re: Proposed revisions to Zoning Code Amendments on Off-Street Parking Requirements and Design

Standards, following Planning Commission public hearing (1-22-2010)

Background

The Comprehensive Planning Committee met on February 2nd and discussed the Planning Commission public hearing on proposed code amendments to Saint Paul's off-street parking requirements and design standards. The committee reviewed the public comments and discussed possible revisions to the code amendments in light of the testimony. It requested staff to do follow up research on a few items and consult with other City staff.

Analysis

Below is a list of parking code sections which the committee discussed on 2-2-2010. For each section there is a short note on the public hearing comment or committee question staff was asked to address, followed by analysis and a recommendation for the committee. The recommendations refer to text revisions which can be found in the code document (enclosed) and are explained in the Revisions and Rationale table. Each of these documents shows changes made since the public hearing in red text. Some of the revisions found in the code and table are not related to the topics below, they are simply continued wordsmithing by staff.

Minimum parking for auto uses – 63.207(a)

There was testimony expressing concern about minimum parking for auto service businesses being set to 1 space per 400 sq ft, like other retail and service businesses. (Note: The proposed requirement is actually 1 space / 400 sq ft + 1 space / service bay.)

- Do these businesses create higher parking demand than other retail service businesses, due to cars being stored for servicing, either on a daily or long-term basis?
- Would the proposed 1/400 requirement for these uses generate new issues or nuisances from the businesses?

Analysis

• Staff did a visual parking survey of seven (7) auto service businesses on the late morning of Thursday, Feb. 4th. In the visual survey, parked cars were counted and noted as appearing to be there on a short-term or long-term basis. Staff then compared the number of parked cars per business to the estimated number of required parking spaces the site would have under our current and proposed parking requirements. The table below summarizes the results.

Site	# of parked cars	Any long-term? / Vacant spaces?	Current required parking	Proposed required parking	Would proposed required meet parking demand for short and long-term cars?
1	9	No / 8 vacant	13	10	Yes
2	10 + others next door??	Yes / no	21	15	? - Not if the long-term cars next door are with the business
3	8	1 long / no	10	8	Yes
4	10	4-5 long / no	7	5	No, although close to meeting short-term
5	3	No / 1 space	8	6	Yes
6	8	No / 8 vacant	12	9	Yes
7	16	Yes / 4-5 vacant	10	7	No, although closer if no long-term

- What the survey and table indicate is that the proposed parking requirement of 1/400 appears to be adequate to meet the <u>daily</u> parking demand at auto service businesses, but it is not adequate to provide enough space if long-term vehicle parking occurs on the lot. The policy question is whether providing enough space for long-term parking is desired, knowing that such parking increases the visual impact of a larger parking lot, but reduces the chances of spillover parking from the properties if they use short-term spots for long-term parking.
- Conditional Use Permits (CUPs) are required for auto service businesses. Conditions such as
 maximum # of cars allowed to be parked on the lot are more effective in addressing and managing
 the look and operation of these businesses, including parked cars.
- Changes to required parking will not alter the parking and operation of non-conforming auto businesses that do not have a CUP.

Recommendation

 Retain proposed code amendment that changes required parking to 1 space/ 400 sq ft + 1 space / service bay. Continue to manage nuisance concerns related to auto businesses through the CUP process.

Minimum parking for bingo halls, pawn shops and currency exchange – 63.207(a)

There was testimony expressing concern about currency exchange, pawn shops and bingo halls having reduced parking requirements.

• Pawn shops and currency exchanges are proposed to be required at 1 space per 400 sq ft GFA and bingo halls are proposed at 1 space per 200 sq ft GFA. This is a reduction of current requirements in both cases.

- Do these businesses create higher parking demand than other retail service businesses?
- Would the reduced requirements generate new issues or nuisances from the uses?

Analysis

- Bingo halls are proposed to be required the same amount of parking as dance halls and assembly
 halls, which are estimated to be of similar intensity. Staff feel that these types of places will not
 create as much parking demand as bars and that the current requirement of 1 space per 75 sq ft is
 excessive.
- Other cities studied do not have a higher parking requirement for pawn shop and currency exchanges than for general businesses.
- Staff did a visual parking survey of two (2) pawn shops on the late morning of Thursday, Feb. 4th. (Other pawn shops and currency exchanges in Saint Paul were not able to be evaluated because they do not have clearly delineated parking lots; they are located along commercial corridors with street parking or shared lots.) Staff then compared the number of parked cars per business to the estimated number of required parking spaces the site would have under our current and proposed parking requirements. The table below summarizes the results.

Site	# of parked cars	Current required parking	Proposed required parking	Would proposed required meet parking demand for short and long-term cars?
1	10 cars - many	29	16	Yes
	vacant spaces			
2	6 cars; 9 vacant	29	16	Yes
	spaces			

- What the survey and table indicate is that the proposed parking requirement of 1/400 appears to be more than adequate to meet the daily parking demand at pawn shop businesses.
- Conditional Use Permits (CUPs) are required for pawn shop and currency exchange businesses, which provides a better mechanism than parking requirements to manage the operation of these businesses.

Recommendation

 Retain proposed code amendments that reduce required minimum parking for pawn shops, currency exchanges and bingo halls to better match parking demand and requirements for similar intensity uses.

Maximum parking requirement – 63.207 (c and d)

There were two public comments opposing a parking maximum and two comments suggesting that the maximum should be set lower. There was also a comment stating that the code language was confusing for maximums and conditions when exceeding the minimum.

Analysis

 Our parking utilization studies were used to determine a maximum parking level that would accommodate the vast majority of the most popular businesses during busy hours. The 300% for eating uses and 170% for other uses provides an adequate range of parking to meet the low and high end of parking demand.

- The CUP provision allowing exceedance of the maximum with proof of need provides a reasonable option for businesses that have uniquely high parking demand.
- Code language in Section 63.207(c and d) is confusing and should be rewritten.

Recommendation

- Retain proposed code amendments for maximums set at 170% and 300% of minimum.
- Revise Section 63.207(c and d) wording to clarify intent.

Mixed use corridor reduction - 63.212 and 60.214

There was general support in public comments for allowing a 10% reduction to parking minimums within a quarter mile of mixed use corridors, but some committee members expressed concern about how much land it would apply to.

Analysis

The attached map shows the eligible 10% reduction zones based on the currently drafted language

 within one quarter (1/4) mile of each of the Land Use Plan's "Mixed Use Corridor" street segments.

Recommendation

Retain the proposed mixed use corridor reduction eligibility for sites in proximity (1/4 mile) to the
mixed use corridors. These corridors were identified during the Comp Plan process as conducive to
multi-modal trip options and are intended for stronger TOD development patterns that enhance the
urban form of the areas and make them even more conducive to biking, walking and transit.

Preferential parking spaces – 63.213

There was mixed reaction to requiring 5 of 5% of parking spaces to be set aside for preferential parking spots. The burden of enforcement was one key concern. Committee members asked that the proposed language be revised to <u>allow</u>, but <u>not require</u>, up to 5 or 5% of spaces, whichever is lower, to be designated for preferential parking.

Wheel stops – 63.311

There was concern expressed about earth berms not being strong enough to serve as wheel stops for cars, as allowed in our current and proposed landscaping requirements. Committee members agreed that this was a legitimate concern and asked that the proposed language be revised to not allow earth berms for this purpose.

Tree plantings – 63.314 (d)

Comments submitted from a landscape architect questioned the proposed minimum landscape dimensions for tree planting. The committee members agreed that this should be investigated.

Analysis

• The City forester was asked to review the proposed tree planting requirements for parking lots. He replied with two memos, attached. Many of his recommendations are detailed landscaping considerations which should be evaluated in a comprehensive review of the City's landscaping and stormwater design standards. It is my understanding that staff from DSI will be leading such an effort in the coming year or two. To the extent possible, staff incorporated a few revisions in the

parking code. Unfortunately, the ideal quantity and quality of soil needed to support vigorous tree growth is space and cost prohibitive. The City and the public want lovely trees in the urban environment, but such trees are not easy to grow in limited space. Thus, the "Gordian Knot" that Greg refers to.

• Staff reviewed the proposed tree canopy regulations for the Critical Area and found them similar to the proposed parking code revisions.

Recommendation

 Adopt modest revisions to tree planting requirements which balance space and cost limitations with the desire to provide conditions adequate for better tree growth and survival than experienced in new projects complying with current minimum planting standards.

TDM plan requirement – 63.122

There was one public comment objecting to the proposed TDM requirement. The committee members felt comfortable with the requirement generally, but had some questions about its implementation.

• How will the City determine that "good faith effort" has been achieved to warrant release of the financial guarantee?

Analysis

- City staff will work with the applicant and Smart Trips to evaluate TDM Plan implementation and then make the final determination if good faith effort has been achieved. There will be clear administrative procedures for conducting this evaluation, modeled after materials currently in use by Eden Prairie and Bloomington.
- City Attorney will assist with legal enforcement and bond release terms.

Recommendation

Maintain the proposed TDM plan requirement and procedures.

Recommendation

That the Comprehensive Planning Committee recommend revisions to the off-street parking requirements, as noted above and in the attached DRAFT Off-Street Parking Code Amendments and forward them to the Planning Commission for consideration on March 12, 2010.

Staff Contact

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